



Philately of Manchukuo: A Personal Perspective

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by John Kellas III

Japanese expansion in the Pacific, 1874-1939.



The State of Manchukuo and its regions, 1933-1945.



Harbin 哈尔滨 is a major city and provincial capital in northeastern China. It lies on the southern bank of the Songhua River. The city was established in 1898 by a Polish national, Adam Szydlowski, during the construction of the East China Railway. More than 10,000 Poles built and then ran the railway at the turn of the century. Szydlowski eventually became the city's first president.



Harbin train station, 1905



Harbin central main street, circa 1930

The city had very strong Russian ties due to its location and trade ties. Wealthy White Russian émigrés flocked there after the Russian Revolution. It was considered China's fashion capital in the 1920's, by which time the population was well over 120,000. Sixteen countries established consulates to serve their nationals there. The Japanese invaded Manchuria in 1931, establishing a puppet government throughout the region.

Manchukuo's first stamp issues, July 26, 1932.

The ½ fen to 10 fen stamps depict the White Pagoda, a 13 story tower carved with images of the Buddha in the city of Liao-yang, 64 km South of Mukden. The pagoda is all that remains of the once important Guan Yu temple. The 13 fen to 1 Yuan values show the Chief Executive of Manchukuo, Puyi.



Edict announcing Henry Puyi as Emperor Kāngdé, 3/1/34



詔書

奉天承運 皇帝詔曰

我國家肇基於茲，於二年前，天無寧象，兵阻國號，滿洲國之基業，遂告中絕。朕躬奉天職，承運大業，維新以來，雖經艱難，然終能維持國體，保全宗廟。今茲三月一日，乃我國之國慶日，亦即朕親政之日。朕當與國民共負救國之責任，以期國家之復興。凡我國民，其各盡忠職守，共濟艱難，庶幾國祚永隆，民生安樂。此詔。

御名 御璽

國務總理大臣 各部大臣

康德元年三月一日



Text of the Edict

For the mandate of heaven, the Emperor declares as follows:

Our country's establishment is done. The name is Manchukuo, effective from the start of next (second) year. The heaven loves our people. Our friendly neighbors trust and protect us. We have seen from earlier that brutality and slaughtering is everywhere. Tolerance and military impotence. We failed heaven. We couldn't stand up. However, The Empire of Japan, despite all suspicions and offensiveness, laid a helping hand. I hereby give a big bow. They made me the ruler, returned me my people, as all exiles now gathering. All waiting will be thriving again, like the Sun and Moon shining. People always say the Emperor does not have relatives. Morality is his closest relative. And people live with a desire. No leader means chaos (no desire). I'm here to take this seat. As if all responsibility tells, I can't refuse to respect (accept). Heaven today ordered that. From Tatung 3rd Year March 1st the new emperor sits on his throne. Change the year code to Kāngdé 1st Year. Keep Manchukuo the name. The world is still full of disasters and hardships. We don't dare to feel safe today. All the defense works. Diplomatic affairs and strategy need to be collaborated with Japan together and united as if we have one heart. To consolidate the relation the terms of the details, agreements and treaties are not changed with Japan. People in our country- despite races and ethnic groups from now on treat each other with highest sincerity. Share hardships and profits. What I have said today is as bright as sun. My Fate is irreplaceable. Everyone has now heard it.

Seal. Name

Kāngdé 1, March 1st

Chancellors from all departments, Premier of State Council

The source of much of the material presented here.

A correspondence developed between an American diplomat in Harbin, Manchukuo and a stamp collector from 1936 to 1940.

More elaboration needed here...

Special China Mail Stamps (Third Issue) 1936- no specific date of issue
2f, 8f depict the Imperial Crest of Manchukuo.
4f, 12f show 長白山 Zhǎngbáishān (Mount Changbai) and the Heavenly Lake, the birthplace of the Manchu dynasty.



Fourth Regular Issue 12/05/36

½f, 1f, 1½f, 3f, 5f show the New State Council Building, Hsinking.
2f, 6f, 20f, 50f show Farmers Carting Soya Beans.
4f, 7f, 12f show the Qing Dynasty Peiling Mausoleum at Mukden.
10f, 30f, 1y show the Summer Palace at Chengteh.
38f, 39f show an aircraft flying over the Sungari River railway bridge.



Surcharges to China Mail Issues 04/01/37

The change in postal rates introduced on 1st April 1937 encouraged the authorities to use up all the old stock of China Mail stamps. Later in 1937 the Post Office issued new set of China Mail stamps in keeping with the new pricing.

To clear existing stock they overprinted the new April price increase value on the stamps that remained unsold. The overprint by the Manchukuo Postal Administration Office in Hsinking consisted of four or six characters, the vertical spacing of the first batch (and most numerous) was 6.5 mm but was later changed to a narrower 4.5 mm spacing. This made it easier to ensure all characters appeared on each stamp, as there had been registration issues with previous print runs.



Special China Mail Stamps (Fourth Issue additions) 1937

2½f shows the Imperial Crest of Manchukuo

5f, 13f showing 長白山 Zhǎngbáishān (Mount Changbai) and the Heavenly Lake

Although China had accepted the use of stamps bearing the name Manchukuo, it was decided to produce a further issue of China mail stamps in line with the 1st April increases to postal prices. This gave rise to the fourth issue of China Mail stamps with new values.



American Consulate General,
Harbin, September 28, 1937.

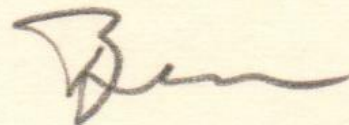
Dear John:

Herewith some stamps commemorating the fifth anniversary of the founding of this northern paradise. I could not get any of the 20 fen (sen in Japanese), as only a few were printed. I understand the price here is already more than a yen.

Edee and Barbara got back a week ago today, and we are all nicely settled. They had a fine time, but the family exchequer suffered a lot.

Edee has written you the news, I think. It's so cold in here I can't type.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be the name "Ben".

Completion of the Five Year Plan for Re-building of the Capital 09/16/37

2f, 10f shows a pouter pigeon overlooking Hsinking.

4f, 20f features the flag of Manchukuo waving above the new State Council Building (not the Imperial Palace as shown in some catalogues).



Special Issue for New Years Greetings 12/15/37

A single stamp for use on New Year's greetings cards featuring the character "Hsuan Hsi" Double Happiness. The post office featured a New Year promotion, all letters bearing this stamp could travel for half price between 15th and 30th December 1937, hence the 2f value. The post office ran this offer between 20th and 30th December 1936 and it was so successful that they decided to repeat it, this time with a special stamp.



American Consulate General,
Harbin, December 28, 1937.

Dear John:

Herewith a special issue of "Manchukuo" stamps,
the only one this time, to celebrate January 1, 1938
(5th year of Kangte).

We had a fine Xmas, and are now dieting. The
package to Dairen has not arrived there yet.

Night before last was forty below; last night
only thirty-five. Zero at noon is considered warm.
About 50 Chinese, mostly opium addicts, are picked
up frozen every morning. Nice place.

Best regards,



The Completion of
10,000 km of Railways
12/21/39

2f Manchukuo rail
network map
4f "The Asia," one of
two streamlined express
locomotives.

The Abolition of Extra
Territorial Rights
12/01/37

2f Map of Manchukuo
4f, 8f The Japanese
Residents Association
Headquarters in
Hsinking
10f, 20f The Ministry of
Communication Building,
Hsinking
12f The Department of
Justice Building, Hsinking



AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE

Harbin, July 12, 1940.

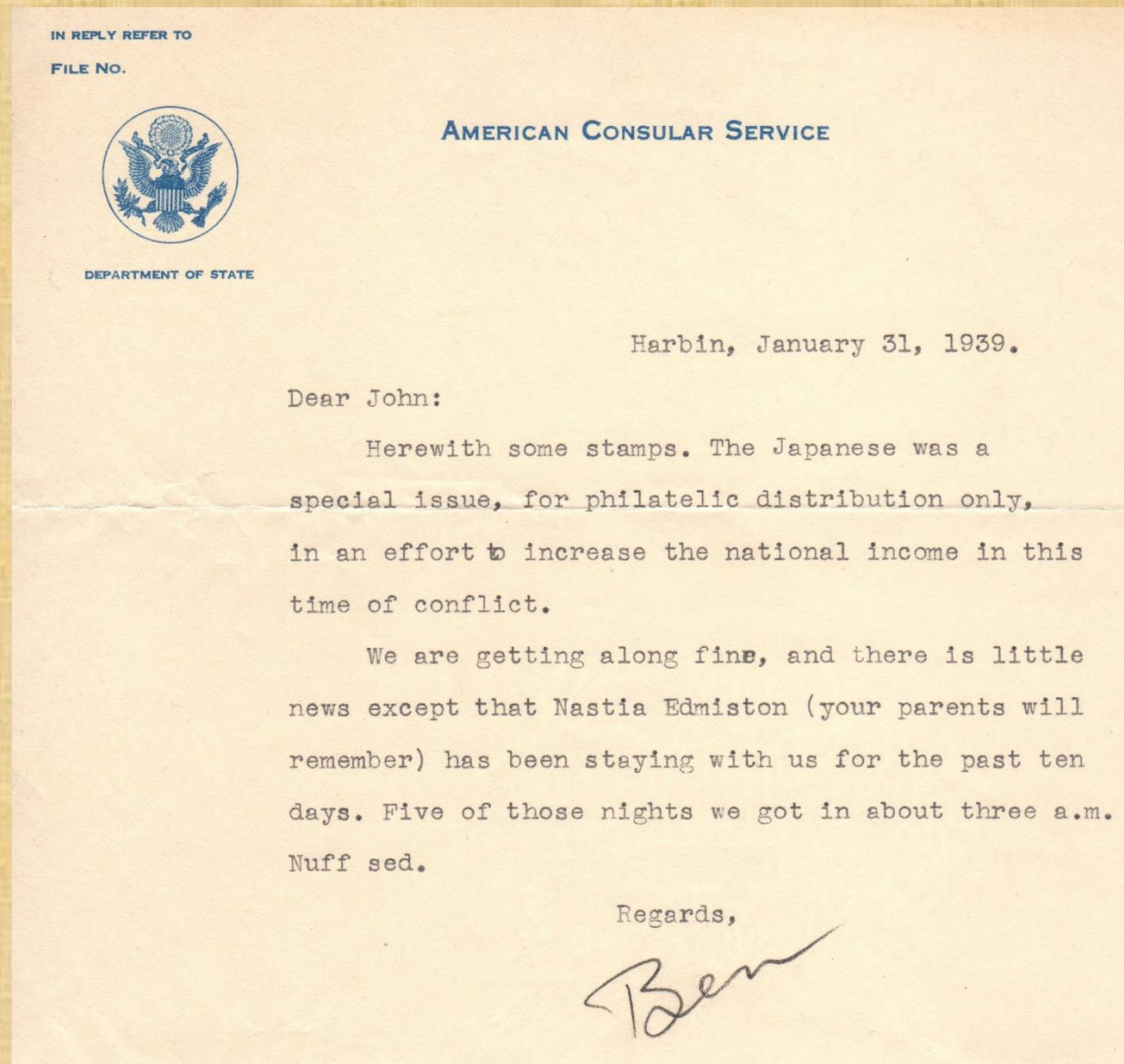
Dear Mr. Benninghoff:

I had reserved a set of our
latest commemorative stamps for you,
and enclose it together with one
saved from last October, while you
were still on leave.

With kindest regards, in which
mother and father join me, to Mrs.
Benninghoff, Bobbie and yourself,

Sincerely yours,

Japan's first National Parks souvenir sheet, issued 12/25/38, the start of a prolific series. Face value 36 sen, sold for 50 sen.



Second Visit of Emperor Kāngdé to
Japan 06/26/40

2f, 4f a Manchurian Crane flying above
the mast of the cruiser with Chinese and
Japanese characters.



新京 Hsinking
city cancel



哈尔滨 Harbin city
cancel used at right

Used June 26-28, 1940 with an
interchangeable date in several cities.
The cancel text explains that the stamps
are to commemorate the second visit of
the Emperor Kang-Teh to Japan in both
Chinese (top) and Japanese (bottom)
characters. The cancel also features the
national flowers, apricot and cherry.

Mr. Penninghoff

Commemorative Stamps

June 26, 1940

Commemorating the visit
of His Majesty the Emperor of
Manchukuo to Japan.



By late 1940 the outbreak of World War II turned the world upside down. Foreign diplomats were recalled from their posts and mostly abandoned the Japanese state.



This unissued 1944 semi-postal duo was in aid of the Patriot Aviation Fund, raising revenue for the armed forces of Japan and Manchukuo. Worded in both Chinese and Japanese the slogan along the bottom reading 3+47f, "The aspiration of the youth is as high and lofty as the airplanes in the sky" with the 6+44f reading, "Donating to (enable) planes to defeat the enemy". A base postal rate increase from 3 to 5 fen and 5 to 10 fen caused them not to be released. Overprinting was never considered. Stocks were looted in August, 1945.



Modern day Harbin, 10.6 million population in 2010, about the size of Chicago.

The End

Most of the stamp informational text came from a wonderful Manchukuo philatelic site, www.manchukuostamps.com.
It has a wealth of specialty details about stamps, cancels, and much more worthy of your time and attention.

Scanning and layout by Tom Fortunato.